



## AMERICAN OPERA CLASSICS

Renowned as an influential jazz pianist, James P. Johnson also flourished as a composer of opera and of show tunes in the 1920s and 1930s. His two short operas *The Dreamy Kid* and *De Organizer* offer contrasting stories of African American life at that time, revealing both its incredible hopefulness and precariousness in the inter-war years. *The Dreamy Kid* is a tragedy, marked by police violence in a racially unjust atmosphere, and *De Organizer* is a hopeful story of solidarity and resistance meant to break the twin oppressions of poverty and racism. Johnson sets these stories to an eclectic and powerful mixture of jazz, swing, blues and ragtime that capture the essence of African American music-making in the early 20th century.

\*WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING

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James P.  
**JOHNSON**  
(1894–1955)

**De Organizer** (late 1930s)  
Reconstructed by James Dapogny  
(1940–2019)

**Libretto by Langston Hughes** (1902–1967)

**De Organizer** ..... Darnell Ishmel, Baritone  
**De Organizer's Woman** ..... Monique Spells, Contralto  
**Old Man** ..... Kenneth Kellogg, Bass  
**A Woman** ..... Rabihah Davis Dunn, Soprano  
**Old Woman** ..... Olivia Duval, Soprano  
**Brother Doshier** ..... Emery Stephens, Tenor  
**Brother Bates** ..... Lonel Woods, Tenor  
**Overseer** ..... Branden C.S. Hood, Bass

**The Dreamy Kid** (excerpts) (1937)\*

Reconstructed by James Dapogny  
Libretto by Eugene O'Neill (1888–1953)

**Mammy** ..... Elizabeth Gray, Mezzo-soprano  
**Ceely Ann** ..... Lori Celeste Hicks, Soprano  
**Irene** ..... Olivia Duval, Soprano  
**Dreamy** ..... Lonel Woods, Tenor

University of Michigan Opera Theatre  
University of Michigan Symphony Orchestra  
Kenneth Kiesler

A full track list and recording details  
can be found inside the booklet.



The libretti are included in the booklet, and may also  
be accessed at [www.naxos.com/libretti/669041.htm](http://www.naxos.com/libretti/669041.htm)

Booklet notes: Cody M. Jones, James Dapogny

Cover: Lonel Woods as Dreamy and Elizabeth Gray  
as Mammy in *The Dreamy Kid* • Photo: Peter Smith

Playing  
Time:  
**66:01**

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